

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) ~~An apparatus~~ A device for distributing thermoplastic material supplied from a plurality of liquid inlets in a cross-machine direction of a meltspinning apparatus, the device comprising:

a linear flow equalizer including a plurality of flow passageways of substantially equal path length that extend ~~in the cross-machine direction and~~ in a downstream direction, each of said plurality of flow passageways receiving the thermoplastic material from at least one of the plurality of liquid inlets, said plurality of flow passageways arranged in a plurality of rows, each of said plurality of rows aligned in the cross-machine direction, adjacent pairs of said plurality of rows being arranged in a spaced relationship relative to each other in a machine direction, and said plurality of passageways in each of said plurality of rows cooperating to divide a distributing flow of a the thermoplastic material supplied from the plurality of liquid inlets into individual streams having a spaced relationship in the cross-machine direction; and

a forming member positioned ~~[[in the]]~~ downstream ~~[[direction]]~~ from said linear flow equalizer, said forming member having a surface oriented in the cross-machine direction and positioned relative to said plurality of flow passageways for merging the ~~individual streams~~ thermoplastic material discharged exiting from said plurality of flow passageways.

2. (Currently Amended) The ~~apparatus~~ device of claim 1 further comprising:

a spinneret positioned downstream from said forming member, said spinneret having a plurality of orifices coupled by said forming member in fluid communication with said first plurality of flow passageways for receiving the thermoplastic material and forming filaments therefrom.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Currently Amended) The ~~apparatus~~ device of claim 1 wherein said plurality of flow passageways further comprises:

a first plurality of elongated slots each extending in the cross-machine direction and including opposed closed ends substantially equidistant from one of the plurality of liquid inlets; and

a first plurality of throughholes each substantially registered in alignment with one of said opposed closed ends of a corresponding one of said first plurality of elongated slots.

5. (Currently Amended) The ~~apparatus~~ device of claim 4 wherein said plurality of flow passageways further comprises:

a second plurality of elongated slots each extending in the cross-machine direction and including opposed closed ends substantially equidistant from one of the first plurality of throughholes; and

a second plurality of throughholes each substantially registered in alignment with one of said opposed closed ends of a corresponding one of said second plurality of elongated slots.

6. (Currently Amended) The ~~apparatus~~ device of claim 1 wherein said surface of said forming member is concavely curved.

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Currently Amended) A ~~linear-flow equalizer~~ device for distributing a thermoplastic material supplied to a spin pack of a meltspinning apparatus having a cross-machine direction, the device comprising:

an inlet plate having a plurality of flow passageways for receiving the thermoplastic material, each of said plurality of flow passageways having an outlet, said plurality of flow passageways being spaced substantially equidistantly from each other in the cross-machine direction, and each of said plurality of flow passageways being substantially equal and substantially symmetrical in the cross-machine direction;

a first equalizer plate positioned in a downstream direction from said inlet plate, said first equalizer plate ~~[[and]]~~ having a first plurality of elongated slots each centered about ~~[[an]]~~ said outlet of a corresponding one of said plurality of flow passageways, each of said first plurality of elongated slots capable of receiving ~~a flow of~~ the thermoplastic material from the corresponding one of said plurality of flow passageways, and each of said first plurality of

elongate slots extending in the cross-machine direction and including opposed closed ends substantially equidistant from one of said plurality of liquid passageways;

a second equalizer plate positioned in the downstream direction from said first equalizer plate, said second equalizer plate having a first plurality of throughholes each substantially registered in alignment with one of said opposed closed ends of a corresponding one of said first plurality of elongated slots, each of said first plurality of throughholes capable of receiving ~~the flow of~~ the thermoplastic material from a corresponding one of said first plurality of slots, and said first and second equalizer plates cooperating to ~~divide~~ distribute the thermoplastic material ~~supplied from said plurality of flow passageways into individual streams having a spaced relationship~~ in the cross-machine direction; and

a forming member positioned in the downstream direction from said second equalizer plate, said forming member having a first surface positioned in the cross-machine direction and positioned for merging ~~individual streams~~ thermoplastic material discharged ~~exiting~~ from said first plurality of throughholes.

9. (Currently Amended) The ~~linear flow equalizer device~~ of claim 8 further comprising:

a combining plate configured to combine the ~~merged individual streams of the~~ thermoplastic material from said forming member with another thermoplastic material; and

a spinneret coupled in fluid communication with said combining plate, said spinneret receiving the combined thermoplastic materials and forming multicomponent filaments therefrom.

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Currently Amended) The ~~linear flow equalizer device~~ of claim 8 further comprising:

a third equalizer plate positioned in the downstream direction from said second equalizer plate, said third equalizer plate having a second plurality of elongated slots each substantially centered in the cross-machine direction about one of said first plurality of throughholes, each of said second plurality of elongate slots having opposed closed ends substantially equidistant from one of said first plurality of throughholes; and

a fourth equalizer plate positioned in the downstream direction from said third equalizer plate, said fourth equalizer plate having a plurality of second throughholes each substantially registered in alignment with one of said opposed ends of a corresponding one of said second plurality of elongated slots.

12. (Currently Amended) The ~~linear flow equalizer device~~ of claim 8 wherein said first surface is concavely curved.

13. (Currently Amended) The ~~linear flow equalizer device~~ of claim 8 wherein said first plurality of elongated slots are arranged in substantially parallel first and second rows in the cross-machine direction; and said first plurality of throughholes are arranged in substantially parallel first and second rows in the cross-machine direction.

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Currently Amended) The ~~linear-flow-equalizer device~~ of claim ~~[[14]]~~ 13 wherein said first surface is concavely curved for intercepting the first thermoplastic material exiting from said first row ~~of the first row~~ of the first plurality of throughholes, and said forming member further comprises a second concavely-curved surface positioned for intercepting the ~~[[first]]~~ thermoplastic material exiting from said second row of said first plurality of throughholes.

16. (Currently Amended) The ~~linear-flow-equalizer device~~ of claim 8 wherein said inlet plate includes a plurality of liquid-carrying channels coupling the corresponding one of said plurality of flow passageways in fluid communication with a corresponding one of said first plurality of elongated slots.

17. (Currently Amended) The ~~linear-flow-equalizer device~~ of claim 16 wherein each of said plurality of liquid-carrying channels includes a plurality of ~~intersecting~~ linear segments that extend symmetrically in the cross-machine direction and in a machine direction, and said linear segments arranged such that said outlet of each of said first plurality of throughholes is positioned in a corresponding one of substantially parallel first and second rows aligned in the cross-machine direction.

18-19. (Cancelled)

20. (Currently Amended) The ~~linear flow equalizer device~~ of claim 16 wherein said inlet plate includes a downstream surface carrying said plurality of liquid-carrying channels, and a second plurality of throughholes upstream of said first equalizer plate, each of said second plurality of throughholes substantially registered in centered alignment with one of said first plurality of elongated slots.

21. (Currently Amended) The ~~linear flow equalizer device~~ of claim 8 further comprising:
a third equalizer plate downstream of said inlet plate, said third equalizer plate having a plurality of liquid-carrying channels with a plurality of intersecting linear segments that extend symmetrically in the cross-machine direction, said plurality of liquid-carrying channels coupling said plurality of flow passageways of said inlet plate in fluid communication with said [[said]] first plurality of elongated slots of said first equalizer plate.

22. (Currently Amended) The ~~linear flow equalizer device~~ of claim 21 wherein each of said plurality of liquid-carrying channels includes a plurality of intersecting linear segments that extend symmetrically in the cross-machine direction.

23. (Currently Amended) The ~~linear flow equalizer device~~ of claim 21 wherein said plurality of linear segments extend symmetrically in a machine direction orthogonal to the cross-machine direction.

24. (Currently Amended) ~~The linear flow equalizer device~~ of claim 21 wherein said plurality of liquid-carrying channels branch such that said first plurality of throughholes are arranged in substantially parallel first and second rows aligned in the cross-machine direction.

25-31. (Cancelled)

32. (Currently Amended) ~~An apparatus~~ A device for distributing first and second thermoplastic materials in a cross-machine direction of a meltspinning apparatus, comprising:

a first linear flow equalizer including a first plurality of flow passageways of substantially equal path length that extend in the cross-machine direction and in a downstream direction, said first plurality of flow passageways cooperating to divide ~~a flow of~~ the first thermoplastic material into individual streams having a spaced relationship in the cross-machine direction;

a first forming member positioned in the downstream direction from said first linear flow equalizer, said member having a surface oriented in the cross-machine direction and positioned relative to said first plurality of flow passageways for merging the individual streams exiting from said first plurality of flow passageways;

a second linear flow equalizer including a second plurality of flow passageways of substantially equal path length that cooperate to divide ~~a flow of~~ the second thermoplastic material into individual streams having a spaced relationship in the cross-machine direction; and

a combining plate coupled by said first forming member in fluid communication with said first linear flow equalizer and coupled in fluid communication with said second linear

flow equalizer, said combining plate capable of combining the first and second thermoplastic materials to form multi-component filaments.

33. (Currently Amended) The ~~apparatus~~ device of claim 32 wherein said second plurality of flow passageways of said second linear flow equalizer extend in the cross-machine direction and in a downstream direction.

34. (Currently Amended) The ~~apparatus~~ device of claim 32 further comprising:

a second forming member positioned in the downstream direction from said second linear flow equalizer and coupling said second linear flow equalizer with said combining plate, said member having a surface oriented in the cross-machine direction and positioned relative to said second plurality of flow passageways for merging the individual streams exiting from said second plurality of flow passageways.